

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4420

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PBOR, LE, IS, SY, PLO
SUBJECT: PAKRADOUNI ON THE U.S. ROLE IN SOUTH LEBANON

1. SUMMARY: PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU MODERATE KARIM
PAKRADOUNI BELIEVES THAT KEY TO A CEASEFIRE IN SOUTH
LEBANON IS HELD BY U.S. AND THAT SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMEN-
TATION WILL OPEN THE WAY TO REAL POLITICAL RECONCILIA-
TION IN LEBANON. END SUMMARY

2. POLITICAL OFFICER MOLINEAUX SPOKE TO LEADING
PHALANGE PARTY POLITICAL BUREAU MODERATE
KARIM PAKRADOUNI SEPTEMBER 2. PAKRADOUNI PRESENTED
HIS PERSPECTIVE ON SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFORTS TO IMPLE-
MENT PHASE III OF CHTAURA AGREEMENT IN SOUTH LEBANON,
AS IT WILL AFFECT BOTH OVERALL MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS
AND FUTURE OF LEBANON.

3. PAKRADOUNI (WHO PRECEDING DAY HAD BEEN IN TOUCH
WITH SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM) SAID ATTENTION
OF INFORMED OPINION IN ARAB WORLD WAS TURNING INCREASING-
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LY TOWARD QUESTION OF ISRAELI ACQUIESCENCE
IN LEBANESE-SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN EFFORTS ARRANGE A
CEASEFIRE IN SOUTH LEBANON. PALESTINIAN WILLINGNESS
TO WITHDRAW FROM SOUTH LEBANON IS CONDITIONAL ON ISRAELI
WILLINGNESS REFRAIN FROM OFFENSIVE ACTIVITIES. THIS IS
SO, NOT BECAUSE PALESTINIANS REALLY HOPE TO REMAIN IN
SOUTH LEBANON IN SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS, BUT BECAUSE

PLO LEADERSHIP CANNOT JUSTIFY TO ITS OWN RANK AND FILE WITHDRAWAL WHILE UNDER ISRAELI BOMBARDMENT, WHICH WOULD LOOK LIKE RETREAT FROM FIELD OF BATTLE. LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS OTHER ARAB PARTIES REGARD ISRAELI WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW PALESTINIANS TO WITHDRAW UNDER "HONORABLE CIRCUMSTANCES" AS TEST OF U.S. ABILITY TO INFLUENCE ISRAEL IN WAYS WHICH WILL MAKE OVERALL PROGRESS ON A MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT POSSIBLE. IF U.S., IN THIS VIEW, CANNOT PERSUADE ISRAELIS TO LET PALESTINIANS DO SOMETHING WHICH IS AS MUCH IN THEIR INTEREST AS IN PALESTINIAN INTEREST, THEN U.S. WILL HAVE DEMONSTRATED ITS INABILITY TO BRING ISRAEL TO ANY REASONABLE TERMS FOR AN OVERALL PEACE SETTLEMENT. PAKRADOUNI NOTED THAT THERE WAS TENDENCY AMONG LEBANESE TO REGARD THEIR COUNTRY AS CENTER OF UNIVERSE AND TO EXAGGERATE INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE OF EVENTS IN LEBANON, AND HE WAS CAREFUL TO AVOID THIS KIND OF BIAS HIMSELF. HOWEVER, PRESENT JUNCTURE IN SOUTH LEBANON, HE WAS CONVINCED, DID INDEED HAVE MAJOR REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE.

4. FOR LEBANON, PAKRADOUNI SAID, SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF CEASEFIRE IN SOUTH WOULD "CLOSE THE DOSSIER" ON THE LEBANESE WAR. PROBLEM OF SOUTH HAD BECOME BETE NOIRE OF SARKIS GOVERNMENT. IT HAD PREVENTED DEVELOPMENT OF CONFIDENCE ON PART OF LEBANESE PEOPLE
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IN GENERAL AND ALSO ON PART OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY THAT WAR IN LEBANON WAS REALLY OVER. IT HAD MADE POSSIBLE KFUR FRONT RESISTANCE TO GOVERNMENT, AND ITS IMPLACABLE REFUSAL TO DEAL WITH LEBANON'S MOSLEMS ON POLITICAL MATTERS, AND MADE MOSLEMS OF LEBANON LESS WILLING TO TALK TO THE CHRISTIANS. SOLUTION IN SOUTH WOULD OPEN WAY FOR MODERATES ON BOTH SIDES OF LINE IN LEBANON TO COME TOGETHER AND SERIOUSLY BEGIN TO REBUILD THE REPUBLIC. OTHER KEY INGREDIENT IN ESTABLISHING AUTHORITY OF SARKIS GOVERNMENT - RECONSTITUTION OF THE LEBANESE ARMY - WAS, HOWEVER, SLOWLY, PROCEEDING. SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF CEASEFIRE IN SOUTH WOULD BE MAJOR BOOST TO THE ARMY, THUS CONTRIBUTING DIRECTLY TO SOLUTION OF SARKIS' MAJOR INSTITUTIONAL PROBLEM.

5. COMMENT: AS DEPARTMENT KNOWS, PAKRADOUNI IS VERY ASTUTE OBSERVER OF LEBANESE AND REGIONAL POLITICAL SCENE. HE IS VERY WELL PLUGGED IN WITH SYRIANS, AND HIS VIEWS ON REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SOUTH LEBANON QUESTION MAY WELL REFLECT WHAT SYRIANS HAVE BEEN TELLING HIM. HIS VIEW OF IMPORTANCE OF A SOUTH

LEBANON SOLUTION FOR LEBANON INTERNALLY IS IN LINE
WITH VIEWS OF MOST OBSERVERS HERE. END COMMENT.
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